

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. An apparatus for bathing a body part, the apparatus
2 comprising:
3 a bath chamber for containing fluid and receiving the body part
4 therein, the bath chamber including at least one surface having a plurality of
5 apertures for providing fluid flow therethrough;
6 a fluid pump in communication with the bath chamber for directing
7 fluid into the bath chamber through at least some of the apertures to contact the body
8 part; and
9 a selection device at least partially disposed within the bath chamber
10 and configured to be selectively actuated by the body part when the body part is at
11 least partially within the bath chamber, the selection device including at least a first
12 setting and a second setting, the first setting facilitating fluid flow through the at
13 least some apertures at a first pressure, and the second setting facilitating fluid flow
14 through the at least some apertures at a second pressure higher than the first
15 pressure.

1 2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the apertures include a set
2 of apertures configured to receive fluid from the pump through a first channel, and
3 wherein the selection device includes a control aperture in the at least one surface
4 and a plug for selectively opening and closing the control aperture, the control
5 aperture being configured to receive fluid from the pump through the first channel,
6 thereby facilitating fluid flow through the set of apertures at one pressure when the
7 control aperture is open and at a higher pressure when the control aperture is closed.

1 3. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of
2 nozzles, each of the nozzles being disposed adjacent a respective aperture in the at
3 least one surface, the nozzles being adjustable for directing fluid flow from the
4 respective apertures.

1 4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the at least one surface
2 includes a bottom surface.

1 5. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a controller in
2 communication with the fluid pump and the selection device, the controller being
3 configured to vary the fluid pump pressure according to a preprogrammed algorithm
4 when the selection device is actuated.

1 6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein selection device includes
2 a proximity sensor configured to facilitate operation of the fluid pump when the
3 body part comes within a predetermined distance of the proximity sensor.

1 7. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a float switch
2 having a switch portion in electrical communication with the fluid pump, and a float
3 portion configured to float in fluid contained in the bath chamber, thereby rising
4 when the fluid level in the bath chamber rises, the switch portion having a first
5 position for prohibiting operation of the fluid pump, and a second position for
6 facilitating operation of the fluid pump, the float portion being further configured
7 to cooperate with the switch portion to place the switch portion in the second
8 position when the float portion rises to a certain level.

1 8. The apparatus of claim 7, further comprising a heater disposed
2 in relation to the bath chamber for heating fluid contained in the bath chamber, the
3 heater being in electrical communication with the float switch such that operation
4 of the heater is prohibited when the switch portion is in the first position and
5 operation of the heater is facilitated when the switch portion is in the second
6 position.

1 9. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the selection device
2 includes a control circuit having at least one touch pad disposed within the bath
3 chamber, the control circuit being configured to selectively facilitate operation of
4 the fluid pump when the body part contacts the touch pad.

1 10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the control circuit is
2 configured to prohibit operation of the fluid pump until the body part contacts the
3 touch pad one time, and to facilitate operation of the fluid pump at predetermined
4 pressures when the body part contacts the touch pad subsequent times, the control
5 circuit being further configured to prohibit operation of the fluid pump when the
6 body part contacts the touch pad after a maximum pump pressure has been reached.

1 11. An apparatus for bathing a body part, the apparatus
2 comprising:
3 a bath chamber for containing fluid and receiving the body part
4 therein, the bath chamber including at least one surface having a plurality of
5 apertures for providing fluid flow therethrough;
6 a fluid pump in communication with the bath chamber for directing
7 fluid into the bath chamber to contact the body part;
8 a valve in communication with ambient air outside the bath chamber
9 and with at least some of the apertures, the valve having a first setting for inhibiting
10 introduction of air into the bath chamber through the at least some apertures, and
11 at least one other setting for effecting introduction of air into the bath chamber
12 through the at least some apertures to generate air bubbles in the fluid contained
13 within the bath chamber; and
14 a selection device at least partially disposed within the bath chamber
15 and configured to be selectively actuated by the body part when the body part is at
16 least partially within the bath chamber, the selection device including at least a first
17 setting and a second setting, the first setting facilitating fluid flow through the at
18 least some apertures at a first pressure, and the second setting facilitating fluid flow
19 through the at least some apertures at a second pressure higher than the first
20 pressure.

1 12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the apertures include a set
2 of apertures configured to receive fluid from the pump through a first channel, and
3 wherein the selection device includes a control aperture in the at least one surface
4 and a plug for selectively opening and closing the control aperture, the control
5 aperture being configured to receive fluid from the pump through the first channel,
6 thereby facilitating fluid flow through the set of apertures at one pressure when the
7 control aperture is open and at a higher pressure when the control aperture is closed.

1 13. The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising a plurality of
2 nozzles, each of the nozzles being disposed adjacent a respective aperture in the at
3 least one surface, the nozzles being adjustable for directing fluid flow from the
4 respective apertures.

1 14. The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising a controller in
2 communication with the fluid pump and the selection device, the controller being
3 configured to vary the fluid pump pressure according to a preprogrammed algorithm
4 when the selection device is actuated.

1 15. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein selection device includes
2 a proximity sensor configured to facilitate operation of the fluid pump when the
3 body part comes within a predetermined distance of the proximity sensor.

1 16. The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising a float switch
2 having a switch portion in electrical communication with the fluid pump, and a float
3 portion configured to float in fluid contained in the bath chamber, thereby rising
4 when the fluid level in the bath chamber rises, the switch portion having a first
5 position for prohibiting operation of the fluid pump, and a second position for
6 facilitating operation of the fluid pump, the float portion being further configured
7 to cooperate with the switch portion to place the switch portion in the second
8 position when the float portion rises to a certain level.

1 17. The apparatus of claim 16, further comprising a heater
2 disposed in relation to the bath chamber for heating fluid contained in the bath
3 chamber, the heater being in electrical communication with the float switch such that
4 operation of the heater is prohibited when the switch portion is in the first position
5 and operation of the heater is facilitated when the switch portion is in the second
6 position.

1 18. The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising a plurality of
2 conduits, each of the conduits being in fluid communication with the valve and with
3 a respective aperture, and wherein the fluid pump is operable to direct fluid into the
4 bath chamber through the at least some apertures, thereby drawing air through at
5 least some of the conduits and into the bath chamber through respective apertures
6 when the valve is set to effect introduction of air into the bath chamber.

1 19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the pressure of air
2 introduced into the bath chamber through the respective apertures is proportional to
3 the pressure of the fluid directed into the bath chamber by the fluid pump.

1 20. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the at least some apertures
2 include an annular portion surrounding a center portion, and wherein the fluid is
3 directed by the fluid pump into the bath chamber through the annular portions,
4 thereby drawing air through respective center portions.

1 21. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the at least some apertures
2 include an annular portion surrounding a center portion, and wherein the fluid is
3 directed by the fluid pump into the bath chamber through the center portions,
4 thereby drawing air through respective annular portions.

1 22. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the selection device
2 includes a control circuit having at least one touch pad disposed within the bath
3 chamber, the control circuit being configured to selectively facilitate operation of
4 the fluid pump when the body part contacts the touch pad.

1 23. The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the control circuit is
2 configured to prohibit operation of the fluid pump until the body part contacts the
3 touch pad one time, and to facilitate operation of the fluid pump at predetermined
4 pressures when the body part contacts the touch pad subsequent times, the control
5 circuit being further configured to prohibit operation of the fluid pump when the
6 body part contacts the touch pad after a maximum pump pressure has been reached.

1 24. An apparatus for bathing a body part, the apparatus
2 comprising:
3 a bath chamber for containing fluid and receiving the body part
4 therein, the bath chamber including at least one surface having a plurality of
5 apertures for providing fluid flow therethrough;
6 a fluid pump in communication with the bath chamber for directing
7 fluid into the bath chamber through at least some of the apertures to contact the body
8 part; and
9 a selection device in communication with the fluid pump, the
10 selection device including at least a first setting and a second setting, the first setting
11 facilitating fluid flow through the at least some apertures at a first pressure, and the
12 second setting facilitating fluid flow through the at least some apertures at a second
13 pressure higher than the first pressure, the selection device including a control
14 circuit configured to delay for a predetermined amount of time the increase to the
15 second pressure after the second setting is selected, thereby providing time for the
16 body part to be at least partially submerged in the bath chamber fluid before the
17 increase to the second pressure.

1 25. The apparatus of claim 24, further comprising a valve in
2 communication with ambient air outside the bath chamber and with the at least some
3 apertures, the valve having a first setting for inhibiting introduction of air into the
4 bath chamber through the at least some apertures, and at least one other setting for
5 effecting introduction of air into the bath chamber through the at least some
6 apertures to generate air bubbles in the fluid contained within the bath chamber.